



STATE OF MINNESOTA
L'Étoile du Nord

Office of Governor Mark Dayton & Lt. Governor Tina Smith

A Better State Government, Veterans and Military Affairs Bill

This session, the Republican-led Legislature initially passed a State Government, Veterans, and Military Affairs Budget that provided insufficient support for Minnesota veterans and our servicemembers, and would have both reduced essential state government services and caused state employee layoffs. For those reasons, [Governor Dayton vetoed that bill](#). Working with lawmakers from both parties, Governor Dayton convinced the Republican-led Legislature to pass a better State Government, Veterans and Military Affairs Budget, and [signed then that bill into law](#). The following is a summary of that bill.

Good Things for Minnesota

The final bill included these provisions that will benefit veterans, servicemembers, and all Minnesotans.

Military Tuition and Enlistment Bonus	Minnesota National Guard members make significant time commitments and sacrifices to serve our state and nation. This year, Governor Dayton and the Legislature invested \$8.4 million in college tuition assistance and enlistment bonuses to ensure citizen-soldiers are supported in their pursuit of higher education.
Expanding the Minnesota GI Bill	The Minnesota GI Bill program provides postsecondary financial assistance to eligible Minnesota veterans and service members. This year, the Governor and Legislature allocated \$400,000 to expand the initiative to permit expenditures for testing, licensing, certification, and apprenticeship programs, which were not previously eligible for state financial assistance. This expansion of benefits will help more Minnesota veterans develop skills for great careers after finishing their service to our state and nation.
Funding for New Veterans Cemetery in Duluth	In 2016, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs provided an \$8.3 million grant to construct a new 19 acre veterans' cemetery in Duluth. The new cemetery will provide a final resting ground for veterans from across northern Minnesota. Currently, the closest veterans'

	<p>cemeteries are in Little Falls and Bloomington, which creates challenges for families who have to travel hours to visit. This year, the Governor and Legislature provided \$1 million to fund operations at the cemetery, when construction is completed next year.</p>
<p>Election Equipment Grants for Minnesota Communities</p>	<p>Minnesota has more than 4,100 election precincts – each of one which is managed by local election officials. This session, the Governor and the Legislature invested \$7 million in a grant program to help local governments afford modern elections equipment. This new equipment will help ensure Minnesotans are better able to participate in our democracy, without unduly burdening local property tax payers.</p>
<p>Affordable Housing for Veterans</p>	<p>The “Journey Home Minnesota” initiative provides safe and affordable housing to both veterans and victims of domestic violence. This year, the Governor and Legislature allocated \$700,000 to Journey Home Minnesota to support the development of affordable housing for low-to-moderate income veterans and their families.</p>
<p>Honor Guards for Veterans Funerals</p>	<p>Minnesota veterans make great sacrifices to serve our country. For their service, they deserve honorable final arrangements. In 2013, Governor Dayton secured funding to provide honor guards at the funerals of Minnesota military veterans. This year, the Governor worked with the Legislature to continue the program, renewing the \$200,000 in annual funding for another two years.</p>
<p>Funding for the Gold Star Program</p>	<p>Minnesota’s Gold Star Families Program supports families as they heal from the loss of loved one who died in combat serving our country. This year, Governor Dayton and Legislature invested \$200,000 to continue funding the program</p>
<p>Adequate Funding for State Agency Operations</p>	<p>Despite a \$1.65 billion state budget surplus, the Republican-led Legislature sought to cut state agency budgets by up to 49 percent this session. State agency budgets and employee salaries make up a small fraction of state spending – just three percent of the budget. The vast majority of the budget is dedicated to school funding and health care programs for seniors and Minnesotans with disabilities. Despite these threats, Governor Dayton was able to secure adequate funding for state government agencies this session, avoiding the deep cuts sought by Republican legislators – cuts that would have reduced services and caused unnecessary layoffs.</p>

Bad Things the Governor Prevented from Becoming Law

Governor Dayton convinced Republicans to remove these bad provisions from the bill.

Stopped Cuts to the Minnesota National Guard	<p>The original budget proposed by Republicans in the Legislature would have underfunded the Minnesota National Guard's tuition and enlistment program. It would have reduced tuition reimbursement for servicemembers.</p> <p>The original budget proposed by Republicans did not fund the Department of Military Affairs operating adjustment, which would have resulted in the cuts, and could have undermined security at Minnesota military installations by hampering the resources needed to post armed sentries – a particularly high-profile need after shootings at bases in Texas, Washington DC, and Tennessee.</p> <p>After vetoing that bill, Governor Dayton worked with the Legislature to provide the Minnesota National Guard with the resources it needs to maintain its readiness and attract and retain servicemembers.</p>
Stopped Attempts to Underfund Services for Veterans	<p>The original Republican budget failed to include operations funding for the Minnesota State Veterans Cemetery in Duluth. It failed to fund repairs and maintenance at other veterans' cemeteries and over 50 facilities statewide that serve veterans, including the Minneapolis Veterans Home which provides round-the-clock care to veterans who need it. The Governor vetoed that bill, securing the funds necessary to provide veterans the dignity and care they deserve.</p>
Attacks on Minnesota's Bipartisan Election Laws	<p>This year, Republicans attempted to enact partisan changes to Minnesota's election laws. Their original State Government bill would have stripped away the Minnesota Campaign Finance Board's rulemaking authority, eliminated the state's campaign public subsidy program, and eliminated candidate spending limits. These changes would have given big businesses and the wealthy an outsized voice in our elections. The Governor vetoed these proposed changes.</p> <p>Following in the tradition set by Governor Tim Pawlenty, Governor Dayton stated that any changes to Minnesota's election laws must be bipartisan to garner his support. Listening to the Governor, the Legislature removed the controversial provision from the final bill.</p>
Blocked Attempts to Undermine Collective Bargaining Rights	<p>This session, Governor Dayton blocked attempts by the Republican-led Legislature to undermine the ability of state employees to secure approval of their collectively bargained wage and benefit packages.</p>

Removed Language Arbitrarily Capping the Size of the State Workforce	Despite a \$1.65 billion surplus and employee compensation only comprising about three percent of the state budget, Republicans in the Legislature attempted to enact an arbitrary cap on the number of state employees. If enacted, this arbitrary cap would have cost nearly 3,300 public servants their jobs and undermined services that Minnesotans across the state rely upon. Governor Dayton prevented this provision from becoming law.
Missed Opportunities <i>Unfortunately, the Republican Legislature did not fund the following priorities in the Governor's budget.</i>	
Investing in Cybersecurity to Protect the Private Data of Minnesotans	In 2014, a study found that 47 percent of American adults had their personal information exposed to attacks. This year, Governor Dayton proposed investing \$27 million in critical cybersecurity improvements that would have helped protect the private data of Minnesotans and ensured state government is able to operate at the speed of commerce. Unfortunately, the Republican-led Legislature declined to fund these important cybersecurity initiatives.
Accounting System Improvements Left Unfunded	In 2011, the State of Minnesota replaced its previous accounting system software, which was last updated in 1998. The new SWIFT software has helped to streamline state transactions and save taxpayer money. This year, Governor Dayton requested investing \$18.2 million to complete needed upgrades to the system. Unfortunately, the Republican-led Legislature declined funding that full amount. Instead, the funded just a small fraction of the Governor's request, providing only \$2.2 million of the total need.